

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
21 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 20

VIETNAM

New Government to be Formed

1. South Vietnam's vice president, Tran Van Huong, was sworn in as the new president immediately following Thieu's resignation. Huong reportedly is also to resign shortly to pave the way for Senate President Tran Van Lam to take over as the new chief of state.

2. Lam apparently intends to form a new government, although there are no reliable indications who will be appointed. Presumably, Lam will turn to such staunch anti-Thieu personalities as General Duong Van "Big" Minh, Buddhist leader Vu Van Mau, and former senate president Nguyen Van Huyen in an effort to encourage the Communists to negotiate a political settlement of the war.

3. In recent weeks, Communist statement's have gradually taken a harder line ruling out any real compromise settlement or coalition government of any substance, instead implying that nothing less than total surrender would be acceptable. Recent guidelines provided to Communist officials at COSVN state that "final victory" is at hand and that there no longer is any necessity for negotiations or any form of coalition government.

4. Initial Communist reaction to the Thieu resignation has continued the same line. A Viet Cong spokesman in

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Paris has been quoted as stating that before negotiations could be considered, the US must "halt all interference in Vietnam" and that not only Thieu "but also his whole regime must be overthrown."

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5. Thus, at this point, the very best a new South Vietnam government might obtain is probably a negotiated surrender. Given the proximity of Communist military forces to Saigon--and the very real prospect of a rapid disintegration of GVN military will in the wake of Thieu's resignation, time may already have run out for any such orderly transfer of power.

Military Action

6. Communist pressure is being maintained on all sides of Saigon. Fighting has continued a dozen or so miles east of Bien Hoa and along Route 4 southwest of Saigon. The roads between Saigon and Tay Ninh City remain blocked, and the communists could overrun the lightly defended town at any time. In addition to the now-routine daily artillery attacks on Bien Hoa, the communists shelled Tay Ninh and several other government holdings on April 21.

7. The South Vietnamese have reportedly decided to move the two Marine brigades south from Bien Hoa to Vung Tau because of morale problems and a complete breakdown of discipline. This will leave the defense of the Bien Hoa-Long Binh complex to the remnants of the South Vietnamese 18th Division, an armor brigade, and an Airborne brigade--all of which have just been pulled back from the Xuan Loc battlefront. The combat effectiveness of these units is questionable and Bien Hoa could fall quickly when brought under strong attack by the approaching North Vietnamese.

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Psychological Pressure Building

8. Although efforts are being made to reorganize and consolidate available forces to defend Saigon, there is a deepening sense of gloom among the senior military officers. Most of these officials believe the military situation is hopeless and do not expect the front line troops to hold very long once heavy attacks begin. The "why continue to fight?" attitude will probably spread to most of the government's forces, especially as additional units retreating from the Xuan Loc battle-front show up in the populated areas. Truckloads of battered troops and tanks with wounded men hanging on the sides have pulled into Beinh Hoa. The combat soldiers will to fight will be further eroded by the resignation of President Thieu.

North Vietnamese Gunboats Come South

9. The North Vietnamese have moved a few of their three dozen gunboats south, and these could pose a threat to evacuation by sea. Soon after the fall of Da Nang, two gunboats were detected moving south to the Cua Viet River in Quang Tri Province. [REDACTED] shows a Soviet-built KOMAR guided missile boat near Tuy Hoa on the central coast. This boat carries two surface-to-surface missiles which have a range of some 22 miles and are highly effective against ships. [REDACTED]

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CAMBODIA

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1. All five US newsmen known to have remained behind in Phnom Penh are "safe and sound"

Radio Phnom Penh came back on the air today: only music is being broadcast, however.

2. Plans for a resistance movement in the northwest have collapsed and former senior officials from the region--including former prime minister In Tam and Battambang governor Sek Sam Iet--have fled to Thailand. Communist forces over the weekend occupied the towns of Pailin and Poipet as well as Battambang city. Communist troops in Battambang have confiscated property and segregated the population according to "class." Former Cambodian Army officers in Battambang have also been separated from their troops. A broadcast over the weekend from the Communist's Hanoi-based transmitter revealed that the provinces of Prey Veng, Koh Kong, Siem Reap, and Pursat had not yet been "liberated."

3. So far there is no information to dispute press claims that Prince Sihanouk passed up the "victory celebration" in Peking over the weekend so that he could remain at the bedside of the ailing queen mother.

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Argentina, Cyprus, Jordan, and New Zealand have now joined the burgeoning list of countries recognizing Sihanouk's "government." Cambodian embassy officials in Bangkok and Vientiane have pledged their allegiance to the new leadership at home.

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